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Language and Letters in Samuel Richardson's Networks

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Abstract

This article aims to provide an overview of Samuel Richardson's social networks, with a special focus on the stylistic features of epistolary exchanges between the novelist and other members of his circles. In the light of the social network theory, which investigates linguistic variations and changes influenced by discourse communities, the present research paper mainly concerns aspects related to register, and investigates the influence of Richardson's 'dramatic style' upon the members of his epistolary networks, as well as the interpersonal involvement strategies he deploys with regard to the addressee and his/her discourse.

Keywords: Correspondence, Involvement Strategies, Samuel Richardson, Social Networking

1. *Introduction*

In 1751 Miss Susanna Highmore, daughter of the painter Joseph Highmore, sketched a group of Samuel Richardson's friends, as they listened to the novelist reading from the manuscript of *Sir Charles Grandison*. Assembled in Richardson's 'grotto of instruction', six of the novelist's admirers sit in elegant attitudes and listen to the latest instalment of Sir Charles's adventures, probably after many long hours spent both writing letters to the author about his hero's marriage and reading his replies. Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), printer, novelist, compulsive author of volumes of letters to friends and acquaintances, was from the early 1740s onwards both at the centre and part of various networks dominated by domestic as well as scholarly and literary activities and mainly sustained by correspondence (Barbault 2011; Carroll 1964). His circles consisted of poets, scholars and especially of educated gentry women, such as lady Dorothy Bradshaigh, Sarah Wescomb, Anne Donnellan, Susanna Highmore, Hester Mulso, Anne Dewes, who were the protagonists of a lifelong commitment to Richardson and the familiar letter (Eaves and Kimpel 1971).¹

As is well known, in the age of the Republic of Letters, letter writing came into prominence for social and cultural reasons, as well as purely literary ones. An emblem of the private domain, the letter performed, in fact, its actual functions

as an agent of the public exchange of knowledge, presenting itself as a peculiar hybrid of the personal and the public, as a text concerning both the private and the public sphere, 'as precious scraps of handwritten paper intended for a single reader, still bearing their broken seals, scrawled directions, and postmarks, and, at the same time, as neatly printed pages circulating in multiple copies and marketed to an avid reading public' (Cook 1996, 2). The introduction and development of reliable postal services favoured the growth of 'real communities of adepts' who used the interactiveness of correspondence as an excellent means for the exchange of views and factual information (Gotti 2006). Letter writing handbooks, scientific treatises and political pamphlets, botanical reports and poetical epistles were just a few examples of the many fields in which communication was conveyed through letters: Newton's studies on optics were circulated by means of a series of letters to the Royal Society, and texts submitted to the *Philosophical Transactions*, the Society's journal, were published as letters.

If communal correspondence within the scientific circles served to spread views and experiments, or to widen the community (Gotti 2006), the correspondence of Richardson's networks was mainly focused on domestic and intellectual affairs, as well as on the discussion of social and ethical values. Moreover, in Richardson's and his correspondents' epistles, which he began to collect in 1741, the letters and the people mentioned are also intertwined with the letters and the characters of his novels, each group participating in the universe of the other, and affecting the language of the other.

In the light of the social network theory, which investigates linguistic variations and changes influenced by discourse communities, the present article aims at highlighting some aspects of the structure and content of Richardson's networks as recorded by their epistolary exchanges. Against a cultural and literary background which presented a major development of reading practices, Richardson's unique and conscious encouragement of his readers to contribute to the factual making of his epistolary novels has been studied and interpreted in various ways, as a desire to control and reform reading, or to lead his readers to moral regeneration, or to respond to a competitive market (Whyman 2007; Keymer 1992). Surprisingly, especially considering an author like Richardson, what has received less attention are the linguistic and stylistic strategies employed to pursue his moral and commercial project.

My analysis is grounded in a historical perspective and I shall try to contextualize the letters and illustrate the main problems related to Richardson's correspondence as far as preservation, location and reliability are concerned. Then, I shall present his correspondents and his network clusters and finally I will concentrate on the question of discourse styles and practices that may be associated with particular registers or genres (Tieken-Boon 2000 and 2008; Sairio 2009b), thus investigating the ways in which the language of these letters may correlate with the topic they deal with (Tieken-Boon 2009; Fitzmaurice 2002). In doing so, I shall provide a qualitative analysis of some extracts of Richardson's out- and in-letters,² focusing on

instances of stylistic strategies which, in most cases, aim at including the addressee's utterance within the addresser's epistolary communication.

2. *The Corpus: Historical Issues, Methodological and Epistemological Problems*

2.1 *Richardson's Correspondence*

The story of Richardson's private correspondence is long and tormented. At the same time as he was involved in the complex gestation of his novels, at least of *Clarissa* and *Grandison*, Richardson began an intense epistolary exchange with a large number of correspondents. The undertaking as a whole was so great that he himself thought of it as a work in itself. He first mentions his project to collect and publish his own private letters in his letter to Thomas Edwards dated 27 January 1755: his aim was the pleasure of reading them for himself and for his family members after his death. The project, he writes, will involve an accurate selection, with the consequent elimination of irrelevant material and a precise request to the various correspondents for authorisation to publish them (Carroll 1964, 317-318).

The decision to implement this plan sounds like a real undertaking to those who know how much effort Richardson put into his prolific correspondence with friends and acquaintances, mainly on the subject of his fictional writing; there came a point when his friend Joseph Spence was prompted to urge him to 'take up a resolution (which perhaps may be new to you) of neither trusting others, nor distrusting yourself too much' (Barbault 2011, I, 320). However, Richardson continued his activity undaunted, weaving a voluminous amount of correspondence with a large number of acquaintances, all members of the intellectual bourgeoisie, and, among these, many young women.

There are few extant letters dating from the period before *Pamela*, and information about their story is learnt indirectly from subsequent ones (see the letter to Johannes Stinstra dated 2nd June 1753, Carroll 1964, 228-235). The first letter to have been published is probably the one Richardson wrote to his nephew, Thomas Verren Richardson, an apprentice printer, in 1732. The epistle, full of advice and instructions, was revised and published in *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum: or Young Man's Companion* (1733), after the premature death of the boy. From 1734 onwards Richardson cultivated a constant and intense exchange with the doctor and literary man George Cheyne, one of the frankest and indeed most pungent critics of *Pamela* and its *sequel*. On the death of Cheyne, in 1743, Richardson had already collected eighty-two letters and had copied them into a separate exercise book, complete with a preface dated 11th August 1744.³ Another important correspondent of the first period is the poet, playwright and critic Aaron Hill, with whom Richardson continued to correspond until 1750. Some letters dedicated to various aspects of *Clarissa*, starting from the length of the plot, were included in a collection in 1753, published after the death of Hill in order to procure funds to support his three daughters.

It was after the publication of *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-54) that Richardson began the systematic organisation of his correspondence with a view to publishing it. He organised it into volumes and carried out a general revision, which involved modifying texts, eliminating entire parts, even changing the names of the correspondents: Aaron Hill and his daughters, Edward Young, Thomas Edwards, Sarah Chapone, Sarah Westcomb, naturally Lady Dorothy Bradshaigh, and others. The letter to Lady Bradshaigh dated 19th November 1757 bears witness to the effort and investment that Richardson seems to bestow on this undertaking (Carroll 1964, 335). It is the founding letter of the *Epistolary*, and the pride, even the vanity of the author emerge clearly: private correspondence has to be arranged according to organisational and narrative dynamics similar to those of novels, he writes, and a perspective of critical writing is added lucidly.

In 1757 the German bookseller Erasmus Reich proposed to publish a selection of letters, but Richardson replied with drastic requests: publication only in German, after formal permission requested by the novelist from the correspondents, anonymity. Nothing came of the project, nor of his nephew William Richardson's proposal to publish the selection in 1781, twenty years after the death of the novelist. It was only in 1804, after the death of Richardson's last daughter, Anne, and of all the correspondents, except Susanna Highmore, that the letters were sold to the publisher Richard Phillips who appointed the writer and essayist Anna Laetitia Barbauld to edit the correspondence, which came out in six volumes.

The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, Author of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison. Selected from the Original Manuscripts, Bequeathed by Him to His Family, To which are Prefixed, a Biographical Account of that Author and Observations on his Writings by Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1804) is still today the richest and most complete collection of Richardson's letters. The volumes contain approximately 400 letters, a third of which written by Richardson (but it has been established that 560 more letters by Richardson and 1060 letters by his correspondents still exist).⁴ The main and most serious criticism that may be directed at Barbauld certainly concerns philological accuracy; the editor herself states in the Introduction that the choice of letters is dictated only by her own taste, guided by 'the necessary office of selection' (Barbauld 2011, I, ccviii). Barbauld inherited material on which Richardson had been the first to exercise the role of editor, and it must also be remembered that the editorial style typical of the period followed very different criteria from those used today; nevertheless, Barbauld's editorial freedom is stunning: she shortens texts, omits dates or transcribes others erroneously, she attributes letters to the wrong correspondents, changes spelling and punctuation, summarises a number of letters into a single letter, without ever indicating this type of intervention on her part (McCarthy 2001).⁵ However, the letters chosen by Barbauld are the ones to be remembered, and precisely by virtue of the procedures of the period, when the editor had become and must therefore be considered as 'a mediating author' (Palander-Collin 2010).

Other collections, not as rich as that of 1804, though perhaps more accurate, include George Cheyne's letters edited by C.F. Mullett, the 1969 edition of letters to and from Johannes Stinstra edited by William Slattery (Slattery 1969), and the important collection of 111 letters from Edward Young (Pettit, ed., 1971). John Carroll's 1964 edition deserves a special mention: he proposes a selection of 128 letters, all by Richardson, in chronological order, with accurate transcriptions, and based on handwritten sources, wherever possible. Only a part of these coincides with Barbauld's letters and the attention paid by Carroll to letters with a literary theme makes the collection all the more valuable, since it makes it possible to trace Richardson's critical stance regarding his own writing and that of his contemporaries directly.

There still remain approximately seven hundred handwritten letters, some of which are either kept at the Victoria and Albert Museum or scattered in various collections. It is also for this reason that critical works dedicated to this correspondence are very few – Malvin Zirker's pages dating back to the middle of the Sixties being, perhaps, the only specific essay (Zirker 1966).⁶ What is more, many of the studies related to letters are based on electronic corpora, a resource which is in fact unavailable for Richardson's letters.⁷

In the early twenty-first century an ambitious project has been undertaken by Cambridge University Press with the aim to collect all of Richardson's letters and those of his correspondents, with Peter Sabor and Tom Keymer as general editors, thus giving readers a chance to read Richardson without any intermediation (Sabor 1989; Ticken-Boon 1991).⁸

2.2 *Richardson's Network Clusters*

The decade from 1742 to 1754, in which Richardson wrote and published his two bulkiest novels, *Clarissa* (1748) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), is also the period in which he increased his epistolary exchanges with groups of friends and acquaintances.

Richardson's collected correspondence shows that a few network clusters can be identified; the strength of their ties, as well as their density and multiplexity vary over time: the connections between network members overlap and are more or less frequent and extended (Sairio 2009a).⁹ Some of the members were invited to Richardson's houses, in London, at Salisbury Court and at North End, and later at Parson's Green, but since the novelist's writings and opinions were almost the only subject treated in the letters and the roles played by the writers did not change, Richardson's circles may be considered a closed network, in that members were accepted and encouraged to participate only if they satisfied precise prerequisites.

Aaron Hill (1685-1750), who lived in Plainstow, and the poet Edward Young (1681-1765), who came from Hertfordshire, were certainly Richardson's chief advisers during the composition of *Clarissa*, and Thomas Edwards

was his closest friend at about the time of the composition of *Grandison*.¹⁰ Edwards's relationship with Richardson is exemplary as far as the construction of ties in Richardson's networks is concerned. Edwards lived in Turrick, near Ellesborough in Buckinghamshire; he was a landscape gardener, and a bachelor, ten years younger than Richardson; his first letter to Richardson, full of praise for *Clarissa*, dates back to the end of 1748, but by April 1750 he was visiting North End, and by June he had been at Salisbury Court several times. He was then introduced at the houses of Richardson's friends Mrs. Donnellan and Miss Mulso, and in a few months his letters present passages that express opinions on various members of the community and show his intimate knowledge of Richardson's friends' lives.

Other correspondents of Richardson's networks were the grammarian Salomon Lowe, the painter Joseph Highmore, Edward Moore, Stephen Duck, 'the thresher poet', Ralph Allen, Samuel Lobb, Colley Cibber, Samuel Johnson, William Warburton: they visited Richardson's homes and, both as senders and addressees, were among his most fervent correspondents and protagonists of his writing strategies.

Female correspondents, however, played a different part in Richardson's personal epistolary story. Biographers and critics agree in describing Richardson as 'a shy, diffident man, who found it difficult to meet people socially... he was unable to meet such men as Garrick, Johnson, or Fielding on equal terms, and he retreated to the more congenial circle of feminine admirers and mild-mannered men who were willing to pay court to him' (Zirker 1966, 85; McKillop 1960; Eaves and Kimpel 1971).

Actually, women dominate Richardson's correspondence only after the completion of *Clarissa*, but the company of young women, his 'adopted daughters', as he called them, who were encouraged to write regular letters to their 'Papa', is a recurrent trait in his life: he used to reproach the reluctant writers, soliciting their letters even when they were his guests, in his own house, at Parson's Green, or at North End.¹¹ A few correspondents may be singled out: the most important one is certainly Lady Dorothy Bradshaigh, his 'ideal reader', who started their correspondence 'in disguise' under the pseudonym of Belfour and who never broke off their exchanges till Richardson's death. Miss Sarah Westcomb and Miss Frances Grainger were two more of his favourites. Sarah is the addressee of one of the most famous familiar letters dating back to 1746, an actual 'ode to correspondence', in which Richardson dictates the rules and the meaning of communal letter writing, celebrating correspondence as a form of communication to be preferred to conversation, defining it as 'the cement of friendship' and considering it a physical substitute for the correspondent herself.

What charming advantages, what high delights, my dear, good, and condescending Miss Westcomb, flow from the familiar correspondences of friendly and undesigning hearts... This correspondence is, indeed, the cement of friendship: it is friendship avowed

under hand and seal: friendship upon bond, as I may say: more pure, yet more ardent, and less broken in upon, than personal conversation can be even amongst the most pure, because of the deliberation it allows, from the very preparation to, and action of writing.

A proof of this appears in the letter before me! – Every line of it flowing with that artless freedom, that noble consciousness of honourable meaning, which shine in every feature, in every sentiment, in every expression of the fair writer!

While I read it, I have you before me in person: I converse with you... I see you, I sit with you, I talk with you; I read to you, I stop to hear your sentiments, in the summer-house: your smiling obligingness, your polite and easy expression, even your undue diffidence, are all in my eye and my ear as I read. – Who than [sic!] shall decline the converse of the pen? The pen that makes distance, presence; and brings back to sweet remembrance all the delights of presence; which makes even presence but body, while absence becomes the soul; and leaves no room for the intrusion of breakfast-calls, or dinner or supper direction, which often broke in upon us. (Barbauld 2011, III, 244-249)

The Collier sisters and Sarah Fielding, the novelist's sister, formed another cluster: their correspondence covers approximately a decade from the end of the 1740s to 1757. *Clarissa* is the main subject of their letters and both Jane Collier and Sarah Fielding were among the defenders of the heroine and her behaviour.

Finally, two main female circles have to be taken into consideration, and it is a matter of age which distinguishes them and determines the kind of relationship and the style of writing. The first group, his 'adopted sisters', was formed by Mrs. Mary Delany, Mrs. Anne Dewes, who was Mrs. Delany's sister, Mrs. Anne Donnellan, Miss Isabella Sutton, and Mrs. Sarah Chapone, all friends of Mrs. Delany. The second circle, more closely connected with the composition of *Sir Charles Grandison*, was formed by younger women, like Susanna Highmore, Hester Mulso and Mary Prescott. All these women knew each other and were all bluestockings, interested in conversation and art and literature, though intimacy was greater within each group rather than between the groups; last but not least, all of them possessed what Susan Whyman calls 'epistolary literacy', 'a skill that Samuel Richardson will manipulate to his advantage' (2007, 579).¹²

2.3 Methodological and Epistemological Problems, or 'Making the Best Use of Bad Data'

The most effective research model, which helps in the study of the potential consequences of discourse communities both on a linguistic and a social level, is the Social Network Analysis (SNA). In Sairio's words, if a social network can be defined as 'a dynamic web of people who are connected to each other in various capacities', SNA studies 'those connections and their influence on individual behaviour. The value of social network analysis in linguistics derives from its focus on the structures of relationships that have the potential to shed light on language change and linguistic influences' (Sairio 2009a, 108).

The 'bad data problem', however, is the key challenge for historical linguists (Labov 1994; Nevalainen 1999), especially when working on letters which are considered a patchy source, because of their state of preservation or because the reciprocal exchanges are not always available. This is certainly so for Richardson's letters, lost or scattered in various collections, printed and at times altered, and even rephrased.

That a complete inventory of the letters of Richardson and his correspondents would be of invaluable importance for Richardsonian studies is indisputable. However, one cannot help nurturing a certain amount of scepticism towards a hypothetical corpus *sine glossa* which would give the reader the impression of a presumed purity of an original text, obtained following a rigorous and complete chronological sequence and also through the supposed real replies of Richardson's correspondents. Besides the controversial completeness and philological accuracy of the texts collected, which have already been compromised by the intervention of the author himself and of various editors, my claim is that the basic problem remains hermeneutic, linked as it is to the very identity of the eighteenth-century *familiar letter* as a text type, in which the truth-fiction borderline is much more blurred than that to be expected from a product in non fiction prose. The epistemological statute of the 18th century letter is based on public and private dynamics and its objectivity and authenticity of discourse may be illusory, in that, even from a linguistic perspective, letters were not 'thoughtless outpourings' but the result of considerable effort (Anderson *et al.*, eds, 1966, 273; Cattaneo 1999), especially in the case of highly literate writers, such as scholars or public figures. Epistolary communication provided an ambiguous message of which authors seemed to be very much aware of: spontaneity and immediacy were presented as the distinguishing traits of a private letter and thus Johnson writes to Mrs Thrale (27 October 1777): 'In a Man's Letters you know, Madam, his soul lies naked, his letters are only the mirror of his breast, whatever passes within him is shown undisguised in its natural process' (Johnson 1952, 228). But it is again Johnson who, apparently contradicting himself, reveals: 'There is, indeed, no transaction which offers stronger temptations to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse. A friendly letter is a calm and deliberate performance in the cool of leisure, in the stillness of solitude, and surely no man sits down to depreciate by design his own character' (Johnson 1905, 207). Eventually, a letter is a rhetorical act, an artefact, both in content and in style, as distant as possible from the image of the letter as *foenestra in pectore*.

This is all the more the case if we move from a single letter to an entire correspondence, whose meaning is redefined by other aspects: a correspondence cannot be read as 'a mere number of letters which remain as they are and whose significance remains unchanged with their re-inscription in a wider text: it is a *collection* of letters, or rather the fruit of a narrativisation which entails the transformation of the performative aspect of the letter into a narration' (Locatelli 1992, 350; my translation), shifting thereby the interest from historic-epistemological to semiotic-structural.

Last but not least, it might also be claimed that Richardson's case suggests other aspects to be taken into consideration by virtue of his profession, which affected his

very identity: Richardson was a printer at heart and, as recorded in his biographies, his activity determined his whole life. In his first arrangement of the correspondence he had already modified the supposed originals, and it may not be far from the truth to argue that his manuscript letters were literally conceived in print.

For all these reasons, I need to 'make the best use of bad data', and I will thus rely on the extant collections of Richardson's letters, primarily on the Barbauld and Carroll editions.

3. *Language and Letters*

Typesetter, printer, editor, author, Samuel Richardson covered all the necessary roles and stages which make up the writing process. However, he has also been studied and appreciated as an innovator of language as far as grammatical, syntactic and lexical aspects are concerned (Tieken-Boon 1987): Dr. Johnson acknowledged him as a 'word-maker', admired his ability to transmit feelings through words (Eaves & Kimpel 1971, 338), and repeatedly quoted him in his *Dictionary* (1755).

Richardson's influence should be understood in the light of his social and socio-linguistic collocation. Geographically and socially mobile, he belonged to a lower-class family, 'a Family of middling Note', as he writes to Johannes Stinstra.¹³ He moved to London from Macworth, Derbyshire, and, though the son of a joiner, he became a wealthy and established printer, and the owner of his own printing house. As a printer artisan who, therefore, belonged to the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, Richardson did not have a classical education: in his letters he defines himself as a businessman with all the duties and limits that this entails. At the same time, however, his role as an author brought him into contact with the languages and styles of the upper class, with people and personalities who were to become models for the favourite characters in his novels. This is a recurrent concern in his correspondence and when writing to ladies who are members of the aristocracy, he often takes pains to ask for advice about expressions considered appropriate for their environment.

Sharing the background of the less affluent classes but elevated by both his entrepreneurial and his literary successes, Richardson is part of an interesting socio-linguistic class which straddles various sectors: he is thus the bearer of a linguistic *in-between-ness* characterised by profound insecurity and conservatism but, in fact, also by the possibility of being seen as a language innovator.¹⁴ From a socio-linguistic point of view, Richardson is an *outsider* and belongs to a category able to convey linguistic changes, which are not possible within groups in which linguistic norms are already consolidated: innovations usually come from the margins, from those grey areas in which bonds and ties are at their weakest (Milroy 1980). Tieken-Boon investigates Richardson's position as an outsider in Samuel Johnson's circle, where the only strong tie he cultivated was with Johnson himself, who showed great appreciation towards the novelist, his works, and his ethical values (Tieken-Boon 1991, 2009). As a member on the

margins of Johnson's network, Richardson was able to play the role of the *actual innovator*, while Johnson was the *early adopter*, 'the innovation being adopted by Dr Johnson and spread as a result of his prestige among the members of his group' (Tieken-Boon 1991, 49-50).¹⁵

In spite of all this, the potential influence of Richardson's style on his correspondents' familiar letters, and the impact of his letters as far as his epistolary stylistic strategies are concerned have been largely neglected and are worthy of investigation. Among similar examples of epistolary liaisons where almost only one side of the writing couple may be read, Richardson offers a special and favourable case in that his personal letters may be defined as less one-sided than others. What I claim is that Richardson develops linguistic and stylistic strategies aiming both at an interpersonal and linguistic involvement of the addressee: in doing so he enhances the conversational quality of epistolary exchanges and, ultimately, teaches a grammar of affectivity, which had quite a few enthusiastic learners, especially among his female correspondents.

In the following paragraphs, I have selected three correspondents in order to present three representative examples of those stylistic strategies and show how Richardson draws the addressee towards his side of the epistolary communication.

3.1 *Edward Moore: Towards a Dramatic Style*

Along with the issues typical of the familiar letter, such as long descriptions of daily routines, or discussions dedicated to the relationship between parents and children, or to the signs of friendship, the most recurrent topic debated among Richardson's correspondents was literary writing, or rather Richardson's literary writing. He was the focus or *ego* of those circles because of his innovatory strategy in planning the plots of his novels through the help and practical advice of his correspondents. The personalities and sentiments of his characters were debated thanks to the exchange of letters which embedded long excerpts of 'dialogues in letters' among the characters of his novels, to be commented, amended, abridged, or otherwise changed. His correspondents were well aware of the fact that the man they exchanged letters with was a novelist and their exchanges resulted not only in examples of literary criticism *ante litteram*, but also of creative writing in that the writer was expected not only to discuss the actions and words of the characters, but also to contribute to the very writing of the narration.

The writer was called on to structure his/her own discourse in an appropriate manner and style which required meeting precise stylistic criteria and in doing so he/she also defined and drew the boundaries of a precise community. This procedure resulted in a particular epistolary production, a sort of subgenre endowed with its own peculiar features, both from a stylistic and a pragmatic perspective.

In a letter to Edward Moore, Richardson gives us one of the most effective examples into the procedure of close reading and creative writing that the novelist practised with his correspondents (Carroll 1964, 118-122; see Appendix).¹⁶

The subject of the exchange is the episode of Lovelace's death in *Clarissa*. As is well known, Lovelace is the rake and libertine of the story, who abducts and rapes Clarissa; he dies in a duel with Clarissa's cousin, Morden, and the event is described by De la Tour, Lovelace's valet. Moore is objecting to the very writing strategy adopted by Richardson and in particular to the voice and point of view chosen to tell the story; Richardson replies, confirming his decisions and giving reasons for this.¹⁷

The addressee's letter, mentioned in the very first lines ('You have done me great Honour, and given me great Pleasure, by yours of the 23rd'), is brought literally inside the page: the words of the addressee are quoted in this case by a tagged direct speech, in order to be commented on, point by point:

[1] You say, Sir, that 'Lovelace shd have given Belford an acct. of his own Remorses after the Duel, or, if that had been improper Morden might have visited him privately, and have written the acct. himself.' Run thro' the Body, delirious, vomiting Blood, the first was impossible: To the second I answer – Morden was wounded himself – They fought in the Austrian dominion: It was concerted that the survivor to avoid public animadversions shd. make off to the Venetian territories.

[2] You wish, Sir, that 'this acct. had been given by any but a Servant.' Shall we suppose that Mowbray or Tourville had been sent abroad with him (Belford was too much engaged) Mowbray wd. have given a Brutal or Farcical acct., if I had respected his Character, as he did of Lovelace's delirious behaviour on the first communication of Clarissa's death...

[3] 'The triumphant Death of Clarissa, (you say, Sir) needed a more particular contrast than in the Deaths of Belton & Sinclair.' – I have a few things to offer on this head, after I have observed that Lovelace's Remorses are so very strongly painted by himself in Letter CXI *a very few days before* the Duel, that there could not be a necessity for any persons giving an acct. of them after in was fought. ... 'Then *seeming* ejaculation, – then speaking inwardly but so as not to be understood' – how affecting such a circumstance in such a Man! And at last with his wonted haughtiness of spirit – *LET THIS EXPIATE* all his apparent Invocation and address to the *SUPREME*. Have I not then given rather a dreadful than a hopeful Exit, with respect to the Futurity, to the unhappy Lovelace! (Carroll 1964, 118-122)

This is a strategy Richardson usually follows as a reaction to the addressee's absence typical of epistolary form. In this special case, however, rather than a confrontation with the interlocutor's 'here and now' world, the pragmatic procedures of the letter focus on fictional plots, and on the 'here and now' of the fictional characters, according to ideological and cultural schemata, apparently shared by both correspondents (Fitzmaurice 2002). The writer seems to appeal to the reader by quoting Lovelace's or Morden's voices from the novel, in an interplay between orality features and literary dialogues. Thus, if the subject of the letter is closely connected to the written mode, what cannot escape notice is that writing is meant and used as a help to informal conversational traits, such as the use of abbreviations ('shd', 'acct.', 'thro', 'wd.', 'could'), which

mimic conversational speed, the capitalization as a form of emphasis (ex. 3), the frequency of questions, and, especially in this case, the embedding of the characters' exclamations.

In a letter to Hester Mulso dealing with a similar topic – the plot of *Sir Charles Grandison* and a possible unhappy ending – Richardson sketches different scenarios and he does so by increasing aspects of face-to-face interaction:

June 20, 1752

[4] My dear Miss Mulso, 'won't I let you know when Harriet is married?' And you really expect no back-stroke of fortune? All to be halcyon to the end of chapter? Think you not that Harriet can shine by her behaviour in some very deep distress? – Would you, if the thing be ever published, have people be inquiring which is sir Charles Grandison's house in St. James's Square? and so forth? Poor Sir Charles Grandison! Would it not be right to remove him? – But shall we first marry him? – Shall we shew Harriet, after a departure glorious to the hero, in her vidual glory?... There, my Miss Mulso!—And the work to be published piecemeal!—What a surprise would this great catastrophe occasion! (Carroll 1964, 215-216)

Apparently he writes as he would talk, and markers of interactive-involved discourse are all present (Biber 1988): address terms, especially the second person pronouns, the use of the inclusive *we* so as to establish a sense of cooperation and an ideological bond with the recipient, temporal and spatial deixis related to the time and space both of the addressee and of the fictional characters, in other parts of the letter the imperative construction, but especially questions and exclamations, an add-on strategy typical of spoken language.

3.2 *Sarah Westcomb: October 1750 - January 1751*

The pragmatic, communicative function of the letter can be compared to other forms of interaction, and I agree with Fitzmaurice who points out that 'although the letter is patently not conversation on paper, epistolary discourse does imitate some of the conversation's characteristics' (Fitzmaurice 2002, 233): like conversation, for example, the letter determines the obligation to reply (the lack of a reply acquiring a value analogous to silence). Nevertheless, considering that the specific medium of this text type remains writing, many of the features defined as oral should be regarded as interactive (Nurmi and Palander-Collin 2008).

Given this double nature of letters, as a genre embedding both writing- and oral-centred traits, Richardson's correspondence displays a wide range of interesting linguistic choices. The syntax of his letters is generally made up of a heavy hypotactic structure, very long sentences, a disjointed relationship between the verb and the subject of the action, to the point of making the reader forget who the agent of the utterance is. In this context, however, the letters to female correspondents show great differences in register, and Richardson tends to shift to significant oral forms – and the women also seem to do this with him.¹⁸

In fact, the addressees' replies vary in style: parameters of age and power relationship seem to affect the reciprocal styles. While correspondents of the same age as Richardson, like Mrs. Donnellan, or Mrs. Delany insist on a formal tone, the younger ones tend to align theirs to more informal conversational traits.

Richardson's correspondence with Sarah Westcomb provides a peculiar example. Unlike most of Richardson's female correspondents, Miss Westcomb was not a bluestocking, and the subjects and style of her letters are ordinary and domestic as well as repetitious and trivial.¹⁹

Richardson seems very fond of her, 'in spite of or because of her utter lack of intellectual pretensions' (Eaves and Kimpel 1971, 199) and this suggests precise power roles in a relationship where he is addressed as the 'dear Papa' and she as 'my ever-amiable daughter'. The five letters exchanged between October 1750 and January 1751 (see Tab.1) are a masterpiece of interaction, of conversation in writing, especially because the major subject concerns a quarrel between the two about Sarah's supposed negligence towards 'her Papa' while on holiday, visiting a Mrs. Jodrell at Ankerwyke (Barbauld 2011, III, 281-310): in Richardson's world this meant she had not written any letters or notes for a few days, as she admits ingenuously:

Enfield, October 15, 1750

The only reason my dear papa has not yet heard from me is, that I have been returned from Ankerwyke but a few days, my mamma's amended health after my leaving her permitting my long absence; and while from home I had not leisure to write. (Barbauld 2011, 281)

OUT LETTERS	IN LETTERS	LOCATION
March 6 1746-47		B III 239-243
No date		B III 243-249
No date		B III 250-255
	Enfield, June 27 1750	B III 256-261
London, July 2 1750		B III 261-270
	Enfield, July 27 1750	B III 271-275
August 6 1750		B III 275-281
	Enfield, Oct 15 1750	B III 281-285
Nov 1 1750		B III 285-293
	Enfield, Nov 23 1750	B III 294-298
London, Dec 5 1750		B III 298-305
	Jan 25 1750-51	B III 306-310
No date B III 311-319		B III 311-319
	Enfield, June 15 1754	B III 320-321
London, Oct 22 1754		B III 322-323
	Kentchurch, Aug 1757 (signs as S. Scudamore)	B III 324-327
September 12, 1757		B III 328-329
	Kentchurch, Mar 12, 1758 (signs as S. Scuda-more)	B III 330-332

Tab. 1 - Correspondence of Mr. Richardson with Miss Sarah Westcomb in Barbauld's edition

Opening and closing formulae are an important clue to the nature of the relationship between sender and addressee (Tieken-Boon 2009).²⁰ In my case study the variations of the remarks introducing the address correlate with the degree of informality between Richardson and Sarah (see Tab. 2), and closing salutations are used to add new issues to the quarrel offering an interesting interplay of mitigating and non-mitigating disagreement strategies:

Place and time	Addresser > addressee	Opening Formulae	Closing Formulae
Enfield Oct 15 1750	W > R	... my dear papa	... and am, with all sincerity and regard, Your very affectionate and obliged S. Westcomb
Nov 1 1750 Enfield	R > W	-----	... and believe me to be, My half, my almost- half, good girl, Your truly affectionate and Faithful humble ser-vant, S. Richardson
Nov 23 1750 London	W > R	-----	... you should at last censure the head, than the heart, of, dear papa, Your still very affectionate, yet hardly-treated, S. Westcomb
Dec 5 1750	R > W	... my dear Miss Westcomb	... or else you will add a concern to my heart, greater than even any you could give or have given to it by your neglects of, My dear Miss Westcomb, Your truly paternal friend, S. Richard-son
Jan 25 1750-51	W > R	Dear Sir	All that I now beg is, that you'd be assured that you can never be, intentionally, neglected or slighted by, good Sir, Your affectionate and filial friend, and obliged humble servant, S. Westcomb

Tab. 2 - Opening and closing formulae Richardson/Westcomb Oct. 1750-Jan. 1751

When the quarrel begins, Richardson seems to increase the *interpersonal involvement strategies* of the addressee and of her discourse, and the second-person pronouns used to appeal to the addressee are higher in frequency than first-person pronouns (ex. 5). The addressee's countermove results in her standing back from the accusations and in deploying *ego-involvement strategies*, a long sequence of sentences whose subject is only the speaker: 'I sat down pretty easy', 'I thought indeed...', 'I ought to have wrote', 'I sent a letter', 'I have been so much vexed', 'I own I was very unwilling to answer', but concluding with the classic metaphor of ink and poison: the emphatic imperative calls the addressee back ('Do, pray Sir, send me...') only to lead to a final if unexpected insult from the 'condescending' Sarah Westcomb! (ex. 5a)

Nov. 1, 1750

[5] ... *You* know, my dear, how ready I held myself to attend *you* to Ankerwyke: *you* know what a piece of self-denial I gave myself, and what a regret *your* mamma Richardson, to consent to part with *you*, for *your* own satisfaction and pleasure, days before *you* would have left us. And, on this occasion, I could almost remind *you* what a painful child *you* were to me the Saturday preceding, by *your* pretty volatility and heedlessness. (Barbauld 2011, 286)

Nov. 23, 1750

[5a] But patience will hold no longer: my vexation rises to my pen; and, for relief, must throw itself off this way. I have heard of dipping one's pen in gall: O that I had a little gall by me now, instead of harmless ink! Do, pray Sir, send me some against next time; as you have, I believe, to spare. (Barbauld 2011, 295)

In another letter written by Richardson, the conventional signs of writing give way to a dialogic mode which includes the addressee within the sender's message. Features of natural conversation increase both in the form of hedges or pragmatic particles such as 'you know', 'I mean', or in the form of speech acts such as direct appeals to his recipient, long lists of questions, at times rhetorical (ex. 6), answers to questions. Entire paragraphs copied from the letters of his correspondents are inserted into his epistle so that they can be debated and contradicted as in a face-to-face conversation (ex. 7).

[6] ... You are not in fault at all!—Not you!—Let me put a few questions to you? Don't you think I love you dearly? With a truly paternal love? You know I do, you answer. Yes, my dear, all that know me know I do. And don't you know how solicitous I was to make an opportunity to attend you at Ankerwyke? And had you not opportunity to write when Mrs. Jodrell retired to write? When Miss Johnson retired to write to her papa?—Will you say no? Did not the former good lady remind you that you should? My concern at your slight has made me inquisitive, I can tell you that. And what then could you want by inclination? (Barbauld 2011, 299)

[7] ... But behold! (Some comfort though slighted!) on the 16th of October in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and fifty, come a letter dated the day before from Enfield, to acquaint me, *'that the only reason that a certain person's dear papa (I say, dear papa!) had not heard from her, was, that she was but a few days before returned from Ankerwyke!'*—The very reason, in short, that he should have heard of her, and the rather, because she promised by word of mouth, as well as by written note, that he should!—And a further reason urged, that of her mamma's amended health! Astonishing! [...] Yet still, you say, *all was charming, catch or not catch!—for now-and-then, for change, you took a breakfast at Sunning-Hill, and a dance too!'*—I heard of you from that place! I did so!—*'Returned more gay (and more forgetful of course!) than you went!'* (How could either papa or promise be remembered, thus gaily diverted?) *Especially when to these amusements, these charming amusements, succeeded converse, music, working,* (Did

you say working?) *reading!*—(Ay, reading!)—*And a rubber at whist* (No question!) [sic] *concluded the night.*' (Barbault 2011, 289-290; my emphasis)

[8] ... I am accused of playing off a sheet full of witticism (Witticism, Miss W.! Very reverent indeed!), which you, poor girl, can't tell what to do with. Very well, Miss W. But I did not expect—But no matter—What have I done with my handkerchief? I—I—I did not expect—But no matter, Miss W. (Barbault 2011, 303)

In spite of a partial reported speech, the words of the correspondent literally merge with those of the writer, sometimes preceded and followed by inverted commas, the fragile sign of a tagged direct speech, which is then transformed into indirect speech by the syntax of the verb. In this way, by engaging the physical, literal presence of the 'you' which is necessary in the epistolary form, Richardson innovates and exalts procedures which were conventional in the period.

Moreover, the emphasis on word order, lexical selection, broken and unfinished sentences, elimination of verbs, repetition of words (as if mimicking a stuttering voice!), exclamation marks and dashes adds a major contribution to stress the oral quality of the text. Parenthetical comments are frequently used to counterpoint the excerpts quoted (ex. 7 and 8), and 'their paratactic possibilities suit the spontaneous nature of spoken language where speakers tend to add on ideas to whatever they happen to be saying at that particular moment' (Brownlees 2005, 74).

3.3 *Lady Bradshaigh: the Perlocutionary Force of a Letter*

My last example of the ways in which Richardson exploits the involving potential of the epistolary form reaches out to the perlocutionary effect produced upon his addressee (Austin 1962).

The influence of Richardson's letters on his correspondents, both on the linguistic level and the register level, can only be confirmed and increased, if we think that his recipients were also his readers, enabled and entitled to correspond only after a close, and often addictive, reading of Richardson's novels, or again, of the letters in his novels. The writing-to-the-moment technique is well known with its specific linguistic kit, together with features of pathemic enunciation (Altman 1982). Clarissa's letters provide numerous examples of this style: the writer's emotion fills the page, it is not narrated but staged, visualized on the page, as in the *Mad Papers*. It is not only a story of tragic events, but also a linguistic representation of passions, which affects the reader to the point of determining a reaction conveyed precisely by the deeply interactive nature of a letter.²¹

Let us read an excerpt from lady Dorothy Bradshaigh's letter of January 1749. Lady Bradshaigh – 'Belfour', at the time this letter was written – was certainly Richardson's most prolific correspondent and probably his favourite.

She had read the first volumes of *Clarissa* and had engaged in a desperate epistolary exchange to avoid Clarissa's death. She had finally promised to read to the end of the book and write her opinions on it in a letter to the author.

Jan. 11, 1749

I verily believe I have shed a pint of tears and my heart is still bursting, tho' they cease not to flow at this moment, nor will, I fear, for some time... When alone in agonies would I lay down the Book, take it up again, walk about the Room, let fall a Flood of Tears, wipe my Eyes, read again, perhaps not three Lines, throw away the Book crying out excuse me good Mr. Richardson, I cannot go on. It is your Fault you have done more than I can bear... I threw myself upon my Couch to compose, recollecting my promise (which a thousand times I wished had not been made) again I read, again acted the same Part. Sometimes agreeably interrupted by my dear [husband], who was at that Time labouring through the Sixth Volume with a Heart capable of Impressions equal to my own, tho' the effects shewn in a more justifiable Manner, which I believe may be compared to what Mr. Belford felt when he found the beauteous Sufferer in her Prison Room. 'Something rose in my throat, I know not what; which made me gurgle as it were for Speech' – Seeing me so moved, he begged for God's sake I would read no more, kindly threatened to take the book from me, but upon my pleading my promise, suffered me to go on. That Promise is now fulfilled, and I am thankful the heavy Task is over, tho' the effects are not... My Spirits are strangely seized, my sleep is disturbed, waking in the Night I burst into a Passion of crying, so I did at Breakfast this Morning, and Just now again. God be merciful to me, what can it mean?... I must lock up such a History from my Sight. (Barbauld 2011, IV, 240-242)

In this case the addressee is not replying by commenting on the actual words of the characters: she reads and cries: 'I read again', she says, 'perhaps not three Lines, and throw away the Book'; then reads and walks 'about the Room'. The emotional language as recorded in the letter of the heroine is transmitted directly to the (female) reader, who is moved to act, often *like* the character, either Clarissa or Mr. Belford. Here, and in many other examples, the letter employs the emphasis on word order and presents a certain lexical selection, but also a special focus on prosodic and paralinguistic coding of emotions in language, as well as a kind of physiology of the emotions, such as trembling hands, or insomnia, all instances of a pathemic dimension.²² In an exemplary lesson on 'how to do things with words', all the actions described by the writer are presented as a direct effect of reading, 'the heavy Task' mentioned by Lady Bradshaigh. The letter literally gets the addressee to do certain actions, precisely those perlocutionary 'effects which are not over'.²³

With this final example, the interpersonal involvement strategies practised by Richardson in his letter writing seem to reach out and capture the recipient even in her/his extratextual world, only to bring her/him back within the epistolary text, which is the space and the time where the linguistic event takes place.

4. *Conclusions*

Richardson's and his correspondents' personal letters may be considered and studied as a peculiar repertoire in the vast corpus of eighteenth-century personal correspondence. The homogeneous literacy of the participants and a certain constant intimacy of the writer-addressee relationship, which may vary only according to parameters of gender and age, are the most relevant features of his network clusters. In addition to a qualitative analysis, a quantitative approach would be needed to reconsider and further investigate the sociolinguistic features of this correspondence, such as factors related to region or to class differences, or to male-female linguistic variables.

With the data I had at my disposal, I started with the writer variables which are more easily identifiable considering the relevance and the public standing of a figure such as Samuel Richardson's. In the face of writers and topics which might entail a formal tone, the register of Richardson's letters seems rather to veer towards informal and face-to-face conversational traits, as if the celebrated writing-to-the-moment style was meant not only as a lesson in fictional writing, but also as a reference style for the various topics and functions of a familiar letter. Thus, both the discussion of narrative worlds and an everyday argument appear to be treated with similar linguistic strategies.

Each of the three examples presented may be approached and expanded from other perspectives, but what may be read as a dominant trait in Richardson's personal letters is the special focus on the interlocutor, the deliberate effort to make his discourse extremely persuasive, and the constant display of a conative function which may also achieve perlocutionary effects. These aspects are accompanied by a set of linguistic and pragmatic involvement features all aimed at including, even graphically embedding, the addressee (with)in the writer's discourse and writing, in a rhetorical, as well as a physical way. The result is a form of epistolary communication which tends to fill in the canonical gap of distance and absence of the addressee, and through a constant double-voiced exchange, to produce the illusion of a dialogue within a monologue. Nothing else but the quintessence of a letter.

Appendix

[1748]

To Edward Moore

You have done me great Honour, and given me great Pleasure, by yours of the 23rd and I should have acknowledged the Favour sooner, had I not been a good deal indisposed, and had I not quarrelled with my Pen [and ink]. Indeed we are hardly Friends yet. But I thought myself oblig'd in Gratitude to you to make the first Advances to the sullen Implement.

Methinks I would be above justifying a Fault merely because it is past & ir-retrievable. But have not I dealt in Death & Terrors? Was it not time I shd. hasten to

an end of my tedious Work? Was not Story, Story, Story the continual demand upon me? I did not desire that the *Reader* sh'd pity Lovelace: But I w'd not punish more than was necessary in his *person*, a poor Wretch whom I had tortured in Conscience (the punishment I always chose for my punishable characters).

You say, Sir, that 'Lovelace shd have given Belford an acct. of his own Remorses after the Duel, or, if that had been improper Morden might have visited him privately, and have written the acct. himself.' Run thro' the Body, delirious, vomiting Blood, the first was impossible: To the second I answer – Morden was wounded himself – They fought in the Austrian dominion: It was concerted that the survivor to avoid public animadversions shd. make off to the Venetian territories. de la Tour had actually some trouble from the magistrates on acct. of the Duel, tho' not the principal; and the principal out of their reach – But suppose it had *not* been so – To whom must Morden have written? – To Belford? – expatiating upon the Death of *his* intimate Friend? – Would it have been natural for Morden to have done this? – He was too brave to insult over the fallen man- Must he have regretted the Action and pitied him? – Would that have been right? Would not that have engaged for the unhappy man general pity, which I was solicitous to prevent? – Had Morden written (to whomsoever) he must in modesty have been brief – could not possibly have expatiated or triumphed. While every praise of Morden from a servant of Lovelace was praise indeed to Morden; and every half hint of the disadvantage of Lovelace a whole one.

You wish, Sir, that 'this acct. had been given by any but a Servant.' Shall we suppose that Mowbray or Tourville had been sent abroad with him (Belford was too much engaged) Mowbray wd. have given a Brutal or Farcical acct., if I had respected his Character, as he did of Lovelace's delirious behaviour on the first communication of Clarissa's death- and if we judge by his behaviour in the Interview between Col. Morden & Lovelace at Lord M.'s, he cou'd not have been a patient spectator of the Exit of a Man of whose skill & courage he had so high an opinion and whom he professed to love: having also had high words with the Col: which Lord M's mediation prevented at the time going further – Tourville was a Coxcomb, and had besides Mowbray's partialities in Lovelace's favour – who then but a Servant cou'd give this acct? and was not de la Tour intrusted with the whole Management and Knowledge of the affair? Was he not a Servant who had travelled with him before? A Servant whom he calls an ingenious and trusty fellow, and with whom he leaves all his orders in Case he shd. fall?

'The triumphant Death of Clarissa, (you say, Sir) needed a more particular contrast than in the Deaths of Belton & Sinclair.' – I have a few things to offer on this head, after I have observed that Lovelace's Remorses are so very strongly painted by himself in Letter CXI *a very few days before* the Duel, that there cou'd not be a necessity for any persons giving an acct. of them after it was fought. I have shewn that there cou'd hardly *naturally* be *any* body by whom an acct. of the Duel cou'd be given, and of the behaviour of the two Gentlemen in it, but de la Tour, Lovelace's travelling valet. And if this be allowed me, let us observe whether that acct: be not given in *Character*, and tho' very brief, with circumstances of *great Terror*, if duly attended to, and which carry in them the marks of *Signal* and *exemplary* punishment- Did not Lovelace *wish to leave tho' triumphed over*? Was Clarissa so mean? Did she wish for life after the infamous outrage? Indeed I was afraid that Lovelace wd. have been thot. too mean in such his wishes after Morden had conquered him, by a skill superior to that on which he had valued himself. I have made Belford say, 'that he

is confident that Col: Morden wd. not take his life at Lovelace's hand.' – Now what are Lovelace's words on receiving the mortal wound – 'The *Luck* is yours Sir' – tho his characteristic pride makes him call it *Luck*, here is a Superiority acknowledged – again when the Col: takes leave of him – 'You have well revenged the dear Creature!' – 'I have Sir says the heroic Col: and perhaps shall be sorry & c.' – again the proud Lovelace yet succumbing, 'There is a fate in it – a *cursed fate* (see the Regret) or this had not been.' Then more explicitly he acknowledged (the however not ungenerously acknowledged) inferiority. – 'But be ye all witnesses that I have provoked my Destiny and own that I fall by a man of Honour.' – Now behold the visible superiority in the Cols: behaviour as related by de la Tour. – 'Sir, I believe you have enough' – this said on giving the first wound, behold Morden throwing down his own sword, and running to Lovelace, 'Ah Monsieur cries the hero, you are a dead man – Call to God for Mercy!' See Morden represented by this servant of Lovelace's 'as cool as if nothing so extraordinary had happened, and assisting the surgeons, tho his own wound bled much,' and not suffering that to be dressed till he saw Lovelace put in to the voiture – giving a purse of gold to Lovelace's Servant to pay the Surgeons, and to reward that Servant for his Care of his dying Master, and see him also bountiful to the very footman of Mr. Lovelace – What Circumstances of noble & generous triumph all there! – And over whom? – over the proud and doubly mortified Lovelace – 'Snatch these few fleeting Moments and commend yourself to God' – What further generosity in these Words! Then for Lovelace's Remorses, even as represented by his Servant at the moment he recd. His Death's Wound (convinced that it *was* his death's wound), 'O my Beloved Clarissa, says he, now art thou – inwardly speaking three or four words more' (his sword dropping from his hand, his Victor hastening to support him) was not this more expressive than if those three or four words had been given? – Then may it not be seen that I have introduced a Ghost to terrify the departing Lovelace, tho' I had not intended any body but Lovelace shou'd see it – Take her away! – Take her away! But named nobody says de la Tour.' – I leave it to the Reader to suppose it the ghost of Miss Betterton, of his French Countess, or of whom he pleases, or to attribute it to his delirium for the sake of & probability. – Hear Lovelace's *further remorses* in de la Tour's acct: – 'And sometimes says the honest valet, praised some Lady (that Clarissa I suppose, whom he called upon when he recived his death's wound) calling her sweet Excellence! Divine Creature! Fair Sufferer! – And once he said – Look down Blessed Spirit, look down, – and there stopt his Lips however moving!' – What a Goddess does he make of the exalted Clarissa! – Yet how deplorably impious, hardly thinks of invoking the highest assistance and mercy! –

Now for his *Sufferings* – 'the first wound followed by a great effusion of Blood' – After the mortal Wound, see him represented as 'fainting away two or three times running and vomiting blood' – '– See him supposed speechless, and struggling against his Fate, at times, in these words. – The Col: was concerned that my chevalier was between whiles (and when he *could* speak & struggle) *extremely outrageous*.' Is not this a strong contrast to the death of Clarissa? 'Poor Gentleman!' adds the pitying valet, behold Lovelace tho object of his own servant's pity! 'Poor Gentleman he had made quite sure of victory!' – again – 'He little thought, poor Gentleman, his end was so near!'

But further as to his sufferings, – See the Voiture tho' moving slowly, by its motion getting his wounds bleeding afresh; and again, with difficulty stopt. See him giving Directions afterwards for his last devoir to his Friend Belford. See him, con-

trary to all expectation, as de la Tour says, living over the night, but suffering much, as well for his Impatience and *Disappointment* as from his *Wounds*. – for, adds the honest valet, ‘He seemed very unwilling to Die.’ – What a further contrast this to the last Behaviour of the divine Clarissa! – See him in his following Delirium Spectres before his eyes! His lips moving, tho’ speechless – *wanting* therefore to speak – ‘See him in convulsions, and fainting away at nine in the morning.’ A Quarter of an hour in them; yet recovering to more Terror. The *Ultimate Composure* mentioned by de la Tour, rather mentioned to comfort his surviving Friends than appearing to have reason to suppose it to be so, from his subsequent description of his last Agonies. *Blessed*, his word – interrupted by another strong Convulsion – *Blessed*, again repeated, when he recovered from it rather to shew the Reader that he felt, than that he was so *Ultimately Composed*. ‘Then *seeming* ejaculation, – then speaking inwardly but so as not to be understood’ – how affecting such a circumstance in such a Man! And at last with his wonted haughtiness of spirit – *LET THIS EXPIATE* all his apparent Invocation and address to the *SUPREME*. Have I not then given rather a dreadful than a hopeful Exit, with respect to the Futurity, to the unhappy Lovelace! – I protest I have been unable to reperse the acct: of his Death *with this great Circumstance* in my Head, and to think of the triumphant one of my divine Clarissa, without pity – and I did hope that the contrast if attentively considered would be very striking.



Samuel Richardson by Joseph Constantine Stadler, published by Sir Richard Phillips, after Susanna Duncombe (née Highmore) coloured aquatint, published 31 May 1804
NPG D5810. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London

¹ The present article is part of an ongoing research project on Richardson's social networks with particular focus on his female correspondents: Its aim is to provide an initial and provisional step towards investigating potential linguistic and stylistic changes as an effect of communal correspondence in Samuel Richardson's circles. The compilation of a database of Richardson's correspondents' letters is currently in progress.

² 'Out-letters' from Richardson to his correspondents, and 'in-letters', the letters addressed to him (Baker 1980).

³ The complete collection was published in 1943 on the bicentenary anniversary of Cheyne's death (Mullett 1943).

⁴ The famous *Biography* by T.C. Duncan Eaves and B.D. Kimpel (1971) contains a valuable Appendix in which there is a list of the dates and collocations of most of the letters which still exist.

⁵ In the manuscripts there are lines and phrases in green ink written by Barbauld to distinguish them from those written by Richardson himself. In the letter from Aaron Hill to Richardson dated 29th July 1741, there is evidence of three writers, besides Barbauld; there is Hill's calligraphy, the date is written by one of Richardson's copyists and a note, which was then crossed out, was written by Richardson himself (McCarty 2001; Sabor 1989). In 2011 Cambridge University Press published a reprint of Barbauld's collection.

⁶ In 2009, I edited and translated into Italian a selection of Richardson's letters on the composition of *Clarissa* (Montini 2009).

⁷ I would like to thank Susan Fitzmaurice, Anni Sairio, and Ingrid Tieken-Boon very warmly for their encouragement and their quick and friendly answers and involvement in my attempt to find any compiled electronic resource or database where Richardson's correspondents' letters were included. My thanks also go to the two anonymous readers of the present article for their suggestions and corrections.

⁸ The first two volumes have been recently published. They include Richardson's correspondence with Aaron Hill and the Hill family (Gerrard, ed., 2013), and his correspondence with Dr. George Cheyne and Thomas Edwards (Shuttleton and Dussinger, eds, 2013).

⁹ Following a quantitative approach, 'density, multiplexity and the strength of ties are the most common categories used to characterise network structure' (Sairio 2008b, 2-3).

¹⁰ For biographical information on Richardson's correspondents I rely on the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Carroll 1964 and Eaves and Kimpel 1971.

¹¹ 'There is', writes Thomas Edwards to Richardson on 30th March 1751, 'and I doubt not but that you have felt it, there is something more deliciously charming in the approbation of the ladies than in that of a whole university of he-critics' (Barbauld 2011, III, 18).

¹² By 'epistolary literacy' Whyman means 'a dynamic set of practices that involves letter writing, reading, interpretation, and response by networks of individuals with shared conventions and norms' (Whyman 2007, 578).

¹³ 'My Father was a very honest Man, descended of a Family of middling Note in ye County of Surry'; to Johannes Stinstra (Carroll 1964, 228-235).

¹⁴ Richardson seems to interpret what in socio-linguistic terms is defined 'styleshift', represented, for example, by the language of women or of upwardly mobile social classes. One characteristic of styleshift is the extreme attention paid to grammatical correctness and a famous example of hyper-correct linguistic behaviour is provided by James Boswell, whose linguistic insecurity as a Scotsman in London led him to fall back on Johnson's style (Tieken-Boon 1991).

¹⁵ According to Tieken-Boon a linguistic-grammatical aspect present in Richardson's prose and considered influential is the use of *do* as an auxiliary: he seems to make an archaic use of it, much more so than any other authors of the same period, and also in his private letters in which the register remains very formal. There is also an abundance of negatives without *do*, both in his informative prose and his letters and in his use of direct speech. As far as lexicon is concerned, Johnson embedded in his *Dictionary* a large number of examples taken from 'A

Collection of Moral and Instructive Sentiments', a collection begun by Richardson's friend Salomon Lowe, finished by the novelist himself and appended to the fourth edition of *Clarissa* (1751) (Keast 1957, 436). Tieken-Boon also maintains the presence of Richardson's influence on another cluster with Sarah Fielding and her friend Jane Collier, in this case with an effect on capitalization in her letters and in her spelling in general (Tieken-Boon 2009).

¹⁶ Edward Moore (1721-1757) was a dramatist. He was the author of *Fables of the Female Sex* (1744), *The Trial of Selim the Persian* (1748), *The Foundling* (1748) and *Gil Blas* (1751).

¹⁷ Richardson's strategy to lure his readers and correspondents into a cooperation on his plots, only to reaffirm his power as author is well known: 'though he said that he depended on readers for inspiration, few of their suggestions were incorporated' (Whyman 2007, 583). As Johnson put it in a letter (28 March 1754) to him: 'You have a trick of laying yourself open to objections, in the first part of your work, and crushing them in subsequent parts' (Redford 1992, I, 79). See also Keymer 2000; Montini 2003.

¹⁸ Following Nurmi and Palander-Collin 2008, I use *register* and *register variation* as reflected by the writer-recipient relationship, and in this sense linked to what they also call *style*.

¹⁹ Sarah Westcomb (Barbauld uses two spellings 'Wetscombe' and 'Westcomb', but in the original Forster manuscripts she signs her name 'Wescomb') was the daughter of Daniel Westcomb and Mary Page. Westcomb died in 1731 and his widow married James Jobson in 1736, but Jobson died four years later. Sarah lived in Enfield, north of London with her mother, who had inherited a large fortune, and with a Miss Betsy Jobson, her step-sister. Her correspondence with Richardson began in the summer of 1746, when she probably met him visiting her friends Vanderblank, the printer's landlord, at North End, Fulham. By October 1746 he was sending her the first volume of the manuscript of *Clarissa*, and by March 1747 she was 'his daughter', praising the fatherless girl's devotion to her sick mother, and soon declared his intention of directing her 'future Steps in life' precisely through *Clarissa*. After her mother's death in 1754, Sarah married John Scudamore in 1756, but remained a constant correspondent until Richardson's death (Eaves and Kimpel 1971, 198-199; Carroll 1964, 21-22).

²⁰ Baker suggests three elements in the standard closing formulae: the address ('I am, Dear friend'), the 'compliments' or 'services' ('your affectionate') and the signature (Baker 1980, 59).

²¹ For the aesthetic, performative and pedagogical aspects of the 'sentimental' in a historical and cultural perspective, see among others Todd 1986; Mullan 1988; Gordon 2002.

²² See also Susanna Higmore to Richardson, January 2, 1749, *Forster Collection* XV, ii.f.12 Victoria and Albert Museum; John Duncombe to Richardson October 15, 1751 (*Barbauld* II, 272); Thomas Edwards to Richardson January 15, 1755 (*Barbauld* III, 112).

²³ On the 'social response' to Richardson's fictional characters see Greenstein 1980; Montini 2003.

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